
Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Meditation

Meditation is an effective technique for quieting and calming your mind and body. It involves focusing on something calming and letting go of other thoughts and concerns. Some people mistakenly believe that during meditation your mind is supposed to be blank. That is not the case. The mind wants to be thinking about something and the goal in meditation is to direct it to a calming focus. If you try to make your mind go blank, it will naturally return to thinking about the things you are concerned about. To meditate, you can choose to focus on your breathing, a sound, a repeated word or phrase (such as 'calm' or 'peace'), or an image.

To begin, establish your posture. The most common positions for beginners are either:

- 1) Sitting on a straight backed chair with your spine straight (but not held rigidly), feet flat on the floor, knees comfortably apart, and your hands resting on your lap
- 2) Sitting cross-legged on the floor, spine straight, with hands on your lap.

Some people meditate while lying down, but a beginner risks falling asleep if they lie down and falling asleep is not the goal of meditation. The cross-legged position may be made more comfortable by placing a pillow under your buttocks so that you are raised slightly with your knees touching the floor. Whichever position you choose, settle your head and body into a comfortable balance. Rocking slightly from side to side and from front to back will help establish the point at which your upper body feels most balanced over your hips.

For this example, assume your focus is on a soothing word. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Breathe naturally, and while you do, slowly repeat your focus word to yourself. When other thoughts intrude, simply notice they are there and let them drift past without directing your full attention to them. Then gently redirect your

focus to your soothing word. Continue for 5 minutes, gradually increasing the time spent meditating to 10 – 20 minutes as you become more skilled. Or, you may choose to meditate for a few minutes each morning and evening. When you are finished meditating, gradually return your awareness to your surroundings.

Maintaining a passive attitude is an important aspect of meditation. Unlike many other activities where you try hard to do something, with meditation if you try too hard you will become frustrated. “Trying hard” and relaxing are not compatible. You will be more successful if you calmly concentrate on doing the exercise rather than trying to force yourself to relax. Relaxation will flow naturally from focusing on the exercise. At first you may only be able to practice for a minute or two at a time. But as you continue practicing on a daily basis, distracting thoughts will become less of a problem and you will be able to meditate for longer periods of time. Meditation takes practice, but the more regularly you do it, the easier it will become for you.